



Charles County Department of Emergency Services STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Section 400 - Emergency Operations

General Emergency Operations - 401.00		
S.O.P. # 401.01	Emergency Vehicle Operations	PAGE: 1 OF 5
EFFECTIVE: 12/16/2003	Authorized: John Filer, Chief	
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401.01.01 Purpose

The purpose of this SOP is to provide employees of the Charles County Department of Emergency Services general procedures and policies for the safe driving, riding and operation of emergency vehicles; for the prevention and reduction of accidents and injuries of public safety personnel and the public. It is the responsibility of every employee of the Charles County Department of Emergency Services to respond safely, rapidly and efficiently to requests for services.

401.01.02 General

These policies and procedures are designed to conform to the motor vehicle laws as set forth by the State of Maryland and United States Department of Transportation (DOT). This SOP is an augmentation and not a replacement to the *Charles County Government Risk Management & Safety Manual*. Employees should review and comply with all policies and protocols as set forth and stated in the aforementioned manual.

401.01.03 Applicability

This SOP applies to all uniformed and non-uniformed personnel.

401.01.04 Definitions

1. **Clean Driving Record:** A clean driving record shows no infractions, to include traffic tickets or points.
2. **Due Regard:** All employees must drive with "due regard" for the safety of others using the highways. State vehicle codes provide and give special privileges to the operators or emergency vehicles; however, this does not relieve the operator from the duty and responsibility to drive with "due regard" for the safety of others.
3. **DOT:** Department of Transportation, the United States federal department that institutes and coordinates national transportation programs; created in 1966.



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4. **EVOC:** Emergency Vehicle Operations Course
5. **MFRI:** Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute
6. **National Safety Council:** An independent safety based training organization whose mission is save lives and prevent workplace injury through education and activism.
7. **Negligence:** An individual's failure to exercise reasonable care under the circumstances.
8. **NFPA:** National Fire Protection Association.
9. **Officer in Charge** - The senior ranking officer or most senior patient care provider on a scene or piece of apparatus.
10. **On-duty:** Status indicating a CCDES employee is in pay status, performing a work substitution, or otherwise officially representing CCDES.
11. **OSHA:** Occupational Safety and Health Administration, a government agency in the Department of Labor to maintain a safe and healthy work environment.
12. **POV:** Personally Owned Vehicle
13. **Spotter:** A human backer/spotter is an easy way to reduce and possibly eliminate accidents while backing up. Whenever a piece of apparatus needs to back up – whether it's 2 feet or 20 – a spotter will stand behind the apparatus and guide the driver with hand signals to prevent it from striking anything. By using a backer/spotter, the driver of the apparatus gains a whole new set of eyes that he or she can utilize to help him maneuver safely.
 - i. A spotter must be easily identifiable; they must be wearing proper reflective clothing so they're visible to all motorists.
 - ii. A portable radio should be used so they can relay instructions or simply say "stop!" if necessary.
 - iii. The use of a flashlight at night is also very beneficial.
 - iv. Anytime the driver loses sight of the spotter they should stop backing up.

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401.01.05 Minimum Driving and Training Requirements

In addition to completing the County's driving requirements as outlined by the *Charles County Safety Manual*, employees must satisfy the minimum DES driving requirements to be considered an "Authorized Driver" and operate an emergency vehicle owned and operated by Charles County and/or the Charles County Volunteer Fire and EMS Association/s. The minimum DES driving requirements are:

1. Must be a minimum of eighteen (18) years of age,
2. Must possess a valid MD Class "C" Driver's License;
3. Must possess a clean driving record;
4. Must have completed a MFRI EVOC Course, National Safety Council "Ambulance Operator's Course" or equivalent;
5. Must complete National Safety Council "Defensive Driving Course";
6. Must complete the DES Emergency Vehicle Orientation.

401.01.06 Emergency Response Modes

Upon arrival of the first assigned unit, the on-scene officer in charge has the authority to change the initial response level of additional responding units as the incident or patient's condition dictates. The senior patient care provider of the transporting apparatus shall designate the appropriate level of transport response based upon the level of care required by the patient as stated in the *Maryland Medical Protocols*.

1. **Priority 1 and Priority 2 Responses:** Priority 1 and 2 responses and/or transports shall consist of an emergency response with visual and audible warning signals and devices. During Priority 1 and 2 responses and/or transports:
 - i. Units will proceed with due regard for personal and public safety, adhering to the applicable federal, state and local traffic laws.
 - ii. The maximum speed for Priority 1 and 2 responses will be governed in accordance with federal, state and local traffic laws, proper and safe handling of the vehicle given traffic and road conditions as well as with absolute public safety in mind at all times.
 - iii. Drivers will proceed through intersections only when the driver can account for all lanes of traffic and has full control of the intersection.
 - iv. During response or transport, drivers of emergency vehicles will bring the vehicle to a **full and complete stop** for any of the following reasons:
 - a. When so directed by law enforcement,
 - b. At blind intersections;
 - c. When the driver cannot account for all lanes of traffic;
 - d. When other intersection hazards are present;
 - e. When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights.



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- v. Units responding or transporting in a priority 1 or 2 response mode will proceed with caution at reduced speeds when driving through school zones and residential streets.
2. **Priority 3 Response:** Priority 3 responses and/or transports will consist of non-emergency responses or transports, complying with all federal, state and local traffic laws. If personnel from another unit are needed to assist during an EMS transport, remaining personnel proceeding to the hospital shall proceed in a priority 3 mode unless emergency response is requested by the EMS supervisor or senior ranking officer.

401.01.07 Policy

When operating County owned emergency vehicles, personnel shall comply with this policy at all times.

1. Only authorized drivers are permitted to drive and operate emergency vehicles.
2. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with all federal, state and local traffic laws and regulations.
3. Drivers of emergency response vehicles shall be directly responsible for the safe and prudent operation of the vehicle under all conditions.
4. Drivers shall not operate emergency response vehicles until all persons in the vehicle are seated and secured with proper safety restraints.
5. All persons riding in emergency response vehicles shall be properly seated and restrained in the vehicle with seat belts at any time the vehicle is in motion.
6. Approved riding positions are designated by the manufacturer of the vehicle and must contain a seat belt restraint.
7. All gear, equipment, tools and bags shall be properly secured and/or stowed in the crew and patient compartments while the vehicle/apparatus is in motion.
8. The only exception to this SOP is for personnel performing or assisting in critical lifesaving care on patients in the back of an EMS transport unit. Personnel should properly secure themselves whenever possible.
9. During non-emergency travel, drivers of emergency response vehicles shall obey all traffic control signals and signs; conforming to any and all federal, state and local laws and regulations.
10. Employees are strictly prohibited from responding in POV's to emergency incidents.
11. Regardless if a piece of apparatus is equipped with electronic backing enhancements and/or aids, a spotter will be used during the backing of any piece of apparatus.
12. When backing apparatus, the driver should roll down his/her window in order to have a clear line of communication with the designated spotter.
13. The spotter should be sure to remain in the clear sight of the vehicle operator through the rear view mirrors.
14. The spotter should be located on the driver's side of the vehicle in direct visual sight of the driver and shall survey the area of hazards such as traffic, pedestrians, parked vehicles and or other obstructions.
15. The spotter shall assist the driver in backing of the vehicle using visual signals and or audible communications as is most appropriate.



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16. All personnel should maintain awareness of hazards such as traffic that may endanger the spotter.
17. When in doubt, personal safety should be placed above any risk or damage to the apparatus.
18. The spotter is responsible for notifying the driver when to STOP.
19. The spotter shall utilize these standardized visual hand signals when assisting a vehicle operator in the backing process:
 - i. **STOP**- both arms raised above head with fists closed. Be sure to yell the stop order loud enough so the driver/engineer can hear the warning.
 - ii. **BACKUP**- One hand above the head with palm toward face, waving back. Other hand at your side (left or right hand optional).
 - iii. **LEFT or RIGHT**- Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended. (Driver will advise the spotter which way the turn will be made. The spotter then assists the driver in backing apparatus. The driver's intentions must be verbally communicated to the spotter.)

401.01.08 Apparatus Positioning

1. Apparatus placement should be in line with the concepts and practices of the Maryland Traffic Incident Management System.
2. Drivers shall position their vehicle in a way that affords the crew the best possible tactical advantage and safety. This is determined by the Officer in Charge or Incident Commander and is based upon the nature of the emergency.
3. Special considerations for EMS and Rescue incidents should be made to position vehicles in a way that allow for access and egress to and from the scene by other emergency apparatus.
4. Care should be taken to ensure the safety of all personnel by positioning apparatus to protect responders working at the scene of an emergency.
5. Drivers should familiarize themselves with the location of the exhaust pipe on the vehicle they are operating and position their vehicle in such a manner as to route hot exhaust gasses away from residences and/or crews working near the vehicle.
6. The apparatus should only be driven or parked on level, hard-packed surfaces.
7. The usage of the vehicle parking brake is mandatory prior to the driver exiting the vehicle.
8. Unless otherwise specified, the use of visual warning devices should be used when parking apparatus on the scene of an emergency incident.